

THE LITERARY MIRROR.

VOL. 1.]

SATURDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 26, 1808.

[NO. 41.]

sweet flowers and fruits from fair Parnassus' mount,
And varied knowledge from rich Science' fount,
We hither bring.

Of Truth.

WHAT is truth? said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer. Certainly there be that delight in giddiness, and count it a bondage to fix a belief; affecting free-will in thinking, as well as in acting: and, though the sects of philosophers of that kind be gone, yet there remain certain discoursing wits which are of the same veins, though there be not so much blood in them as was in those of the ancients. But it is not only the difficulty and labour which men take in finding out of truth; nor again, that, when it is found, it imposeth upon men's thoughts, that doth bring lies in favour; but a natural, though corrupt love of the lie itself. One of the later schools of the Grecians examineth the matter, and is at a stand to think what should be in it, that men should love lies, where neither they make for pleasure, as with poets; nor for advantage, as with the merchant; but for the lie's sake. But I cannot tell: this same truth is a naked and open daylight, that doth not shew the masques, and mummeries, and triumphs of the world half so stately and daintily as candlelights. Truth may perhaps come to the price of a pearl, that sheweth best by day; but it will not rise to the price of a diamond or carbuncle, that sheweth best in varied lights. A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure. Doth any man doubt, that if there were taken out of men's minds vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations as one would, and the like, but it would leave the minds of a number of men, poor shrunken things, full of melancholy and indisposition, and unpleasing to themselves? One of the fathers, in great severity, called poetry, "*vinum dæmonum*," because it filleth the imagination, and yet it is but with the shadow of a lie. But it

is not the lie that passeth through the mind, but the lie, that sinketh in and settleth in it, that doth the hurt, such as we spake of before. But however these things are thus in men's depraved judgments and affections, yet truth, which only doth judge itself, teacheth that the enquiry of truth, which is the love-making, or wooing of it; the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it; and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it; is the sovereign good of human nature. The first creature of God, in the works of the days, was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason; and his sabbath work, since, is the illumination of his Spirit. First he breathed light upon the face of the matter, or chaos; then he breatheth light into the face of man; and still he breatheth and inspireth light into the face of his chosen. The poet that beautified the sect, that was otherwise inferior to the rest, saith yet excellently well, It is a pleasure to stand "upon the sea: a pleasure to stand in "the window of a castle, and to see a "battle, and the adventurers thereof "below; but no pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of truth (a hill not to "be commanded, and where the air is "always clear and serene) and to see "the errors and wanderings, and mist, "and tempest, in the vale below:" so always that this prospect be with pity, and not with swelling or pride.—Certainly, it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth.

To pass from theological and philosophical truth to the truth of civil business, it will be acknowledged, even by those that practise it not, that clear and round dealing is the honour of man's nature, and that mixture of falsehood is like allay in coin of gold and silver, which may make the metal work the better, but it embaseth it: for these winding and crooked courses are the goings of the serpent; which goeth basely upon the

belly, and not upon the feet. There is no vice that doth so cover a man with shame as to be found false and perfidious: and therefore Montaignu saith prettily, when he enquired the reason why the word of the lie should be such a disgrace, and such an odious charge, "If it be well weighed, to "say that a man lieth, is as much as "to say that he is brave towards God, "and a coward towards men: for a "lie faces God, shrinks from man."—Surely the wickedness of falsehood and breach of faith cannot possibly be so highly expressed as in that it shall be the last peal to call the judgments of God upon the generations of men: it being foretold, that when "Christ cometh," he shall not "find faith upon earth."

The Cottage.—A FRAGMENT.

SWEET pliability of the affections! that takes the barb from the dart of misfortune, and shapes the mind to it allotments!—"I have been master of a palace," said Honorius, "and now my only habitation is a cottage. Troops of liveried slaves then obeyed my nod: and my sheep alone are now obedient to me. The splendid board is now exchanged for the fruits that the earth yields to my own labour; and the rarest juice of the vintage is succeeded by the simple beverage of the fountain.

"But am I less happy in this nook, where my ill fortune has placed me, than when I passed my laughing youth in the gaudy bowers of prosperity?—If I am not soothed by flattery, I am not wounded by ingratitude. If I feel not the conscious pride of superior life, I am not the object of calumniating envy; and I am now too far removed into the shade, for it to point its finger at me. Fears I have none: and hope, there is my consolation! there is the source of my joys, and the cure of my sorrows: they no longer rest on vain, idle, fallacious objects; on private friendship, or public justice; they have now a more durable foundation, they rest on Heaven!"

Mr. West's celebrated picture.

DEATH ON THE PALE HORSE; OR, THE OPENING OF THE SEALS.

From a sketch, by B. WEST, ESQ. President of the Royal Academy.

Revelations, chap. vi. 7, 8. "And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was DEATH. And hell followed him: and power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth."

THE class of subjects, to which this noble sketch belongs, cannot with propriety, be denominated the historical; as such, therefore, the same principles of criticism are not to be employed in our examination of it: it belongs to an order of composition, which embraces the loftier subjects of fancy, and the divine flights of inspired poetry; in a word, those subjects, which, having their basis in Revelations, are of a class, to which the most exalted imagination can scarcely expect to rise.

This subject is intended to express the triumph of death over all things, by means of that variety of human calamities and mortal sufferings, which pestilence, famine, and the sword, together with the vices of man himself, have introduced into the world.

Its object is to express universal desolation; to depict all the methods, by which a world may be destroyed.

To bring out the subject of this composition, Mr. West has divided it into three parts. The fore ground contains a group, extending nearly half the length of the canvass, in which are seen death by pestilence, famine, and despair, and by almost every means, which terminate existence in all ages and sexes.

In the second group, we behold lions, men, and horses, in combat with each other, terminated with a furious bull, tossing men and dogs in the air.

The third group rises from the centre of the picture. It is the King of Terrors himself, on his pale horse. On his head is a crown, denoting his sovereignty over all things. His horse is without reigns, and his uplifted arms scatter the shafts of death in all directions around him. His form, in the language of Milton, is "without form." It is dissolving into darkness, it is in awful and terrible obscurity, all the legions of hell are in his train; they are seen in the perspective, and terminate the distances almost in the immensity of space. On the fore ground is a serpent, bruised with a stone, which indicates his death from the hand of man: near the serpent is the dove mourning over his dead mate.

In the back ground, we behold the rage of battle, by sea and land, whilst the elements are convulsed by earthquakes, thunder, and vivid lightning. The eagle is seen on his wing, pursuing and destroying the feathered race; whilst the general colour of the picture denotes an atmosphere filled with every thing noxious and pestilential.

Such is the description of a picture, which has attracted the notice of the community of arts throughout the civilized world, and upon which an eminent writer, whilst it was upon exhibition in the Louvre at Paris, has passed the following

praise, which deserves to be recorded for its equal elegance and justness.

After reviewing the composition at large, he concludes, "This is the most difficult of subjects, which the pencil of man could undertake; but the painter has WILLED it, and it has been DONE."

MONTH. ANTHOLOGY.

Letter

By the late Lord Lyttleton.

YOU have won both your wages. In speaking of the inhabitants of China, I do make use of the word *Chineses*; and I borrow the term from *Milton*. As to your first bet, that I used such an expression, your ears, I trust, will be grateful for the confidence you had in them. But your second wager, that, if I did use it, I had a good authority, is very flattering to myself; and I thank you for the opinion you entertain of the accuracy of my language. My memory will not, at this moment, direct you to the page; but you will readily find the word in the Index of *Newton's* edition of *Milton*.

Of all the poets that have graced ancient times, or delighted the latter ages, *Milton* is my favourite; I think him superiour to every other, and the writer of all others best calculated to elevate the mind, to form a nobleness of taste, and to teach a bold, commanding, energetic language. I read him with delight as soon as I could read him at all; and, I remember, in my father's words, I gave the first token of premature abilities in the perusal of the *Paradise Lost*. I was quite a boy, when, in reading that poem, I was so forcibly struck with a passage, that I laid down the book with some violence on the table, and took an hasty turn to the end of the room. Upon explaining the cause of this emotion to my father, he clasped me in his arms, smothered me with embraces, and immediately wrote letters to all his family and friends, to inform them of the wonderful forebodings I had given of future genius. Your curiosity may naturally expect to be gratified with the passage in question; I quote it, therefore, for your reflection and amusement:

He spake; and to confirm his words, out flew
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
Of mighty Cherubim: the sudden blaze
Far round illumin'd hell!

The principal orators of the present age and one of them, perhaps, a greater than has been produced in any age) are the Earls of *Mansfield* and *Chatham*. The former is a great man; *Ciceronian*, but, I should think, inferior to *Cicero*. The latter is a greater man; *Demosthenian*, but superiour to *Demosthenes*. The first formed himself on the model of the great Roman orator; he studied, translated, rehearsed, and acted his orations: the second disdained imitation, and was himself a model of eloquence, of which no idea can be formed but by those who have seen and heard him. His words have sometimes frozen my young blood into stagnation, and sometimes made it pace in such an hurry through my veins, that I could scarce support it. He however, embellished his ideas by classical amusements, and occasionally read the sermons of *Barrow*, which he considered as a mine of nervous expressions: but, not content to correct and instruct his imagination by the works of mortal men, he borrow-

ed his noblest images from the language of inspiration. Mr. *Edmund Burke* also gives an happy dignity to parts of his speeches (a want of which is, in general, their only defect) by the application of scriptural expressions.

Though I have such bright and venerable examples before my eyes, I pursue a somewhat different, but not an opposite track; for *Milton*, from the excellence and form of his works, has every claim to the title of a classic: from the nature also of his principal subjects, which are drawn from scripture, we may be said in some degree, to read the sacred writings when his great poetical commentary of them (for so I shall call his *Paradise Lost and Regained*) is the object of our studies. The orations of *Cicero*, notwithstanding their character in the world, please, but do not inflame me. We are at too great a distance from the period, and have not a sufficient idea of the manner of their delivery, to be affected by them. They are very fine compositions; and it is the evidence of their being compositions that is their chief fault: and if *Lord Mansfield* were to pronounce the best of them, in his best manner, I doubt much of their supposed effect. They chill the warmth of my feelings; and I have often essayed, but in vain, to work up in me an elevation of mind and spirits from a repetition of the Roman orations. I must acknowledge that *Lord Bolingbroke*, a great and splendid authority, is against me, who, in language more animating than I could ever find in *Tully's* eloquence, declares that no man who has a soul can read his orations, after the revolutions of so many ages, after the extinction of the governments and of the people for whom they were composed, without feeling at this hour the passions they were designed to move, and the spirit they were designed to raise. If this be true, in his Lordship's sense of the expression, I have no soul: but I suspect the truth of this assertion, as I well know that he would, at any time, sacrifice a just criticism to a brilliant passage. His character and genius were both intemperate; and, when his tongue or his pen were pleased with their subject, he was born rapidly on by the stream of eloquence, not considering or caring whether he went. When his imagination was once kindled, it was an equal chance whether he obscured virtue or dignified vice. The source of his delusive writings was an head-strong, vivid fancy, which practised as great deceits upon himself, as he had ever done upon mankind. But to return to my subject.

For the life of me, I cannot read sermons even with *Lord Chatham*; and my hands are too unhallowed to unfold the sacred volume: but I find in *Milton's* poems every thing that is sublime in thought, beautiful in imagery, and energetic in language and expression. To attain a reputation for eloquence is my aim and my ambition; and, if I should acquire the art of clothing my thoughts in happy language, adorning them with striking images, or enforcing them by commanding words, I shall be indebted for such advantages to the study of our great British classic.

I know you would not recommend my friends, the poets, to take a leading part in the study of eloquence. You may probably apprehend that poetical pursuits would be apt to give too poetical a turn to discourse as well as writing; and to beget a greater attention to sound than to sense. Such an idea is certainly founded in

truth; and your objections are perfectly sensible, when an application to the poets is not conducted with judgment, and moderated by prosaick reading and exercises. A little circumstance in point, which just occurs to me, will make you smile: when my father completed the first copy of his history, the friends, to whom he sent it for their criticism and correction, universally agreed in its being written in a kind of irregular blank verse, from the beginning to the end. He was much surprised at the information; but, on examining his work, he found it to be true, and gave to the whole the excellent dress it now wears. Sir Robert R—— was so unfair as to impress some of the passages upon his memory, and has since been so ill-natured as to repeat them. But, to put a period to this long letter, I declare myself to be very angry, when you are but twenty miles from me, that you should not put your horses to your chaise, and be here in a shorter time than is necessary to fill up half a sheet of paper. You would do well to come and amuse yourself here, leaving gouty uncles and croaking aunts to themselves. There is more vivacity concentrated in my little dell, than is to be found in all the ample sweets of your vale. As you are musical, I will prepare a syren to sing to you, and you shall accompany her in any manner you please. Adieu!

Yours most truly, &c.

Extraordinary Diver.

Of all the divers who have given any information from the bottom of the ocean, the famous Nicolas Pesce, mentioned by Rincher, is the most celebrated; the veracity of this account is not in all respects to be depended on, though Rincher assures us he had it from the archives of the kings of Sicily. This famous diver, by his great skill in swimming, and perseverance under water, was surnamed the Fish. This man from his infancy had been used to the sea, and gained a livelihood by diving for corals and oysters, which he sold to the villages. From his long acquaintance with the sea, it at last became almost his natural element: he has been known to spend five days amongst the waves, without any other provision than what he caught there. He often swam over Sicily to Calabria, a most dangerous passage; and frequently would swim among the gulphs of the Lipari Islands, without the least apprehension of danger.

Some mariners one day observed something at a distance from them in the sea, which they supposed to be a sea-monster; but upon a nearer view, they found it to be Nicolas, whom they too into their ship. When they questioned him where he was going on so rough a sea, and at such a great distance from land, he produced a packet of letters, fastened up in a leather bag, which he was carrying to one of the towns in Italy. After stopping with them some time, and eating a hearty meal, he took his leave, and jumped into the sea, to pursue his voyage.

Nature seemed to have assisted him in a peculiar degree to bear the hardships of the deep; for the spaces between his fingers and toes were webbed like a goose, and his chest became so very capacious, as to enable him to take in at one respiration as much breath as would last him the day.

The fame of this extraordinary man soon reached the ears of Frederick, king of Sicily, who, excited by a natural curiosity, ordered that he should be brought before him. The king tho't this a fair opportunity to gain some certain intelligence concerning the Gulph of Charybdis; he therefore commanded the poor diver to explore the bottom of this dreadful whirlpool, and ordered a golden cup to be flung into it, by way of incitement. Nicolas, conscious of the danger to which he was exposed, ventured to remonstrate; but the hopes of reward, the desire of pleasing the king, and the increasing of his own fame, at length prevailed. He immediately jumped into the gulph, and was instantly invisible. The king and his attendants waited with great anxiety for three quarters of an hour on the shore, and at last perceived him buffeting the waves with one hand, and holding the cup in triumph in the other: the cup was immediately made the reward of his bold adventure. He was allowed time to refresh himself, and was then brought again before the king, to relate the wonders he had been witness of. He declared, if he had been apprized of half the dangers he had to encounter, he should never have obeyed the king's command. There are four obstacles, he said, which render the gulph terrible, not only to men, but even to the fishes, who inhabit it. The first, is the great force of water bursting up from the bottom, which requires great strength to resist; secondly, the abruptness of the rocks, threatening destruction on every side; thirdly, the force of the whirlpool, dashing against those rocks; and, fourthly, the quantity and size of the polypus fish, some of which appear as large as men, and stick against the rocks, projecting their fibrous arms to entangle every thing that approaches. He was then asked how he so readily found the cup; he replied, that it had been carried by the waves into the cavity of a rock, against which he himself struck in his descent.—The king wishing further information, prevailed on this unfortunate man to venture a second time. He went down, but was never since heard of.

From Herder's Scattered Leaves.

Sleep.

Among the choir of countless genii, whom Jupiter created for men, in order to superintend, and to bless the short period of a painful existence, was the dim sleep. "What have I to do (said he, surveying his dusky form) in the midst of my dazzling brethren? how sadly I look in the band of the sports, of the joys, and of loves! it may be, that I am welcome to the unhappy, whom I lull to oblivion of their cares; it may be, that I am welcome to the weary, whom I do but strengthen to renew toil: but to those who are neither weary nor woe-begone, whom I only interrupt in the circle of their joys."

"Thou errest, said the father of genii, and of men; thou, in thy dusky form, shalt be a genius, dear to all the world. Dost thou not think that sports and joys fatigue? in truth, they tire sooner than care and want, and beneath to their pampered host, the most loathsome sloth. And even thou, continued Jupiter shalt not be without thy pleasures, but shalt often surpass therein, the whole company of thy brothers." With

these words, he reached out the grey horn, full of pleasing dreams: "Hence, added he, scatter thy poppy seeds, and the happy, no less than the miserable of mankind, will wish for thee and love thee above all thy brethren. The hopes, the sports, and the joys, herein contained were caught by the charmed fingers of thy sisters, the graces, on the most redolent meads of paradise. The ethereal dews, that glitter on them, will image to every one, whom thou wouldst bless, his own wishes, and as the goddess of love has sprinkled them with celestial nectar, their forms will be radiant with a glowing grace, which the cold realities of earth cannot attain.—From amid the rosy band of the pleasures, gladly will men haste to thy arms. Poets will sing of thee, and strive to rival thy enchantments, in their songs. Even the innocent maid shall wish for thee? and thou wilt hang on her eyelids, a sweet, a welcome god." The complaint of Sleep was now changed into thankfulness and triumph, and he was united to the loveliest of the graces—to Pasithea.

Character of a Sot.

A sot is a silly fellow without brains. His eye sight is best when he is stone-blind; for till then he can never see his way home. He is a brewer's pump, to keep the store cellars dry. He is a good scrivener, for he understands conveyancing extremely well. Although he scarcely knows what a pulpit is, yet he is a most religious fellow for the name of God is ever at his tongue's end. He is a camel in his draughts. Terribly afflicted is he with various distempers; being generally seized with the falling sickness at night, accompanied with the dead palsy in his tongue. St. Anthony's fire has visibly settled in his face, and so terribly does the agueshake his hands, that he cannot lift a full gin glass to his head. In short, while he is alive, he is unworthy any person's notice; and after his death, there are no traces of his memory, but on the chalked pannels of alehouses.

Anecdotes.

A Prussian lady, in the habit of giving a portion of 4l. to poor females in her neighbourhood, as an encouragement to their getting husbands, was waited on one morning by a good looking girl accompanied by her intended husband, an ugly, little, deformed dwarf. The lady expressed her astonishment at her not having got a better spouse.—Ma'am, (said the girl) what can a body expect for twenty dollars!

The daughter of Themistocles had two lovers, the one a coxcomb, the other an honest man.—The first was rich the second poor. He took the honest man for his son-in-law; For I had rather said he, have a man that wants wealth, than wealth, than wants a man!

It was a good reason which a gentleman gave to his friend for not pulling off his boots at his lodging, that he had holes in his stockings; though the reason which another gave for wearing his, that he had no shoes to put on, was perhaps still better.

Selected Poetry.

FROM

DARWIN'S BOTANIC GARDEN.

Sympathy.

SO should young SYMPATHY, in female form,
Climb the tall rock, spectatress of the storm ;
Life's sinking wrecks with secrets sighs deplore,
And bleed for other's woes, herself on shore ;
To friendless virtue gasping on the strand,
Bare her warm heart, her virgin arms expand,
Charm with kind looks, with tender accents cheer,
And pour the sweet consolatory tear ;
Grief's cureless wounds with lenient balms assuage,
Or prop with firmer staff the steps of age ;
The lifted arm of mute despair arrest,
And snatch the dagger pointed at his breast ;
Or lull to slumber envy's haggard men,
And rob her quiver'd shaft with hand unseen ;
Sound nymphs of HELICON ! the trump of fame,
And teach Hibernian echoes JONES'S* name ;
Bind round her polish'd brow the civic bay,
And drag the fair philanthropist to day.
So from secluded springs, and secrets caves,
Her Liffy pours his bright meandering waves,
Cools the parcht vale, the sultry meads divides,
And towns and temples star his shadowy sides.

* A young lady who devotes a great part of an ample fortune to well-chosen acts of charity.

FROM THE MONTHLY ANTHOLOGY.

Milo of Crotona.

The champion who most distinguished himself in the Olympick Games, in the *Pale*, at wrestling, according to Pausanias, was Milo of Crotona ; he gained no less than six Olympick, and as many Pythian crowns. There are so many instances of the prodigious strength of this famous wrestler, and most of them so well known, that it would be as endless as impertinent to cite them. But I cannot forbear producing one, as remarkable for the singularity, as the issue of the experiment, Milo, to give a proof of his astonishing power, used to take a *pomegranate*, which, without squeezing or breaking, he held so fast by the mere strength of his fingers, that no person was able to take it from him—"nobody but his mistress," says Elian. But however weak he may have been with regard to the fair sex, his superiour force was universally acknowledged by men, as will appear in the following

EPIGRAM.

"When none adventur'd in th' Olympick sand,
The might of mighty Milo to withstand ;
Th' unrivall'd chief advanc'd to seize the crown,
But mid the triumph, slipt unwary down.
The people shouted, and forbade bestow
The wreath on him who fell without a foe.
But, rising in the midst, he stood and cri'd,
Do not THREE falls the victory decide ?
Fortune, indeed, hath giv'n me one, but who
Will undertake to throw me t'other two ?"

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Portsmouth, Nov. 12.

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